

HAM IT UP

Aussie visits airwave buddy

By MICHAEL HOEFT
Staff Writer

MANITOWOC — There's no doubt that Australian Alan Anderson's voice is known around the world. At least it's known to the 198 members of an international ham radio organization who call themselves the "Magnificent Group."

Anderson, the man behind the distinctly accented voice, is on a five-week visit of North America to personally meet the friends he has gotten to know over the last six years through his home transmitter in Brisbane.

This week, he's been staying with Erv Busse, 1811 Viebahn St., Manitowoc, a member of the group who is better known to hams as W90MO, his licensed call signal.

The members, who hail from the United States, Canada, Australia, England, Denmark and Venezuela, listen in together — clear airwaves permitting — to chat about topics ranging from car repair to fishing. One member, Dan the Weatherman, got his name from his habit of giving daily weather reports.

"We don't discuss religion or politics, but we talk about everything else," said Busse, a retired appliance repairman. Busse started as a ham operator in 1940, then worked on submarine production in Manitowoc until the war's end. He cranked up his rig again in 1946 and has worked up to a

Class A license for ham, or amateur, operator.

In September, 1979, several operators were discussing early airplanes when Anderson called in and addressed them as "the magnificent men in their flying machines." The name stuck, said Busse.

"I feel I know them personally," Anderson said. But he is nevertheless surprised when meeting airwave friends for the first time to note that "their faces don't always match the voices I'd been talking with."

When Anderson arrived at the Milwaukee airport this week, he was wearing a hat inscribed with his own call letters, VK4AND, so Busse wouldn't miss him.

"I got the idea to visit these blokes several years ago," Anderson said. "I wanted to just drop in and say hello."

During the visit, Busse took his Aussie guest to the USS Cobia, the Manitowoc Marina and the Point Beach Nuclear Power Plant.

In between sightseeing jaunts, Anderson got on the air Tuesday using Busse's rig, and signed on as "VK4AND portable QTH (location) of Manitowoc." To hams in California, Nebraska and Missouri, he offered thanks for hospitality during his recent visit. He also got in touch with KC4VW in Washington, D.C., to make ar-

rangements to meet there later in the week. A Portland, Ore., ham offered news on the amount of Japanese cars being moved in from the docks.

"The propagation (airwave clarity) isn't very good," Anderson said, "but I can read you. Hi! hi! That'll put a smile on the dial. This is VK4AND."

After wishing 73s (Morse code for cheerio) to the men and 88s (love and kisses) to the wives, Anderson tallied up 15 station contacts for the hour on the air.

"They'd keep him on the air for three hours if he let them," said Busse.

Anderson, 56, usually goes on the air from 5 to 6 a.m., takes a breakfast of tea and toast, then takes a train into Brisbane to work as a technician for the Central Telephone Exchange. He averages about 14 hours a week at the radio.

This is his first visit to the other side of the world from Down Under, and he cannot get over the changes.

"Everything's backwards," he said. Cars drive on the wrong side of the road, he feels, light switches turn the opposite way, and summer is Australia's coldest season.

The 18-hour time difference between Brisbane and the United States also proved somewhat unsettling. "I actually arrived here before I left Australia," he said.



Staff photo

ON THE AIR — Australian Alan Anderson, seated at microphone, and his Manitowoc host Erv Busse, listen in from other members of the international ham radio group.